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Honoring Barbaro's Memory

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dean'smessage



Barbaro remained in the Hospital's Intensive Care Unit, and under the watchful eyes of his medical team, he slowly grew stronger. "He's a smart horse and a good patient," said Dr. Richardson, emphasizing the colt's positive attitude and excellent appetite.

Daily visits by owners Gretchen and Roy Jackson contributed to that appetite—they brought clippings of fresh grass from their nearby farm. Barbaro relished this treat, and by August, he was strong enough to be hand-grazed outside.

Other visitors came—Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell, stopping by to feed the champion a carrot, delivered promised state funding for the School. Penn president Amy Gutmann came, unofficially, on more than one occasion. Reporters paced the halls of the Hospital, a few lucky ones spending time with Barbaro, his star power undiminished. Interpretive dancer Martita Goshen paid tribute to both the equine athlete and his caregivers, with a performance in the Hospital lobby called "I Could Not Ask for More."

In early January, talk was heard of discharging Barbaro, and sending him to a horse farm in Kentucky, where the warm climate and open fields would mean more room and greater freedom. But complications in his laminitic left hind foot halted those plans; an abscess in the healed right hind foot was followed quickly by laminitis in his two front feet. From the earliest days, Barbaro's owners had not wanted him to suffer—the decision to end the fight was made in consultation with Dr. Richardson. With his owners at his side, Barbaro was euthanized on Monday, January 29, 2007.

While the loss of any patient is painful, Barbaro's loss cast a pall over New Bolton Center. "Certainly, grief is the price we pay for love," said Gretchen Jackson at the press conference announcing his death later that day.

Barbaro leaves us a champion's legacy. In life, he demonstrated power and elegance by doing so well what horses love most: running with all his strength. Treatment following his injury allowed the world to see just how far equine medicine has advanced. And his death rekindled an interest in fighting laminitis, the condition that ultimately took him—and thousands of other horses. The Jacksons recently endowed a chair for equine disease research at the School. "We are very pleased to make this commitment in support of the School of Veterinary Medicine's research of equine diseases," Gretchen Jackson said. "Our close relationship with Dr. Richardson over the last eight months persuaded us to name the chair in his honor. We are indeed grateful to him, and we especially look forward to a future without laminitis." 🍎

Honoring Barbaro's Memory

The heartbreaking end to Barbaro's saga was all too familiar to those who love horses, but the true meaning behind the story is, as Roy Jackson has said, full of hope and inspiration.

At Penn Vet, we will continue the fight against laminitis. What better way to memorialize this charismatic champion than with a focused effort to beat the condition that took him from us. No tribute could be more fitting to his indomitable spirit, or to the millions of people whose imagination he captured, than to achieve this goal. We must use this opportunity—we may not get another—to raise funds to move forward on equine diseases such as this.

On behalf of those closest to Barbaro, I would like to thank everyone, from the professionals in the media to his fans around the world, for their support and kindness throughout his stay at New Bolton Center. Now, by working together to fight laminitis, we can honor Barbaro's memory as a champion, both on the track and off.

—JOAN HENDRICKS, V'79, GR'80
THE GILBERT S. KAHN DEAN OF
VETERINARY MEDICINE